

Figure in Friars' Case Asks Cut in Term as 'Hero'

Rosselli's Plea, Based on Alleged Mission to Kill Castro, Deferred by Judge

BY GENE BLAKE
Times Staff Writer

Alleged underworld figure Johnny Rosselli, 65, Tuesday sought reduction of a five-year prison term on the ground that he had heroically worked with former Howard Hughes aide Robert Maheu in attempts to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

But U.S. Dist. Judge William P. Gray, who had imposed the prison sentence and a \$35,000 fine in the Friars Club card cheating case, said he was not impressed with affidavits and unsigned memoranda filed in Rosselli's behalf.

"I don't think Mr. Rosselli is entitled to Brownie points if these allegations are a fact," Gray told attorney Adrian Marshall.

In Las Vegas, Maheu, who now heads his own consultant firm, told The Times by phone: "I will not dignify such a story by even commenting on it."

Marshall told Gray that in the early 1960s, there was a Central Intelligence Agency mission calling for the assassination of Castro. He said the CIA enlisted the aid of Maheu, who in turn enlisted the aid of Rosselli.

Claims Mission for CIA

There were six attempts made on the life of Castro, and Rosselli had a boat shot out from under him, according to Marshall. However, he said, Rosselli was sworn to secrecy by the CIA.

Maheu's consulting firm had offices in Washington in the early 1960s. He moved to Las Vegas and began full-time work for Hughes when the billionaire industrialist took up residence in Nevada in 1966.

Maheu declined to comment on whether he had done any government work in the period referred to by Rosselli. He said he knows Rosselli, but wouldn't discuss him further. Rosselli was a frequent Las Vegas visitor during the 1956-70 period when Maheu was in charge of Hughes' enterprises there.

Asst. U.S. Atty. David R. Nissen described Rosselli, who was brought to Los Angeles for the hearing from McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary, as "a menace to society."

Hearing Continued for 20 Days

Gray, while not impressed with the story of Rosselli's alleged heroics in Cuba, continued the hearing for 20 days to get a report on Rosselli's health. Rosselli will go back to McNeil Island and will be returned here Oct. 18.

Earlier, Manuel (Ricky) Jacobs, another of the four men convicted in the 1963 Friars Club card cheating conspiracy trial, was granted a reduction of his prison term from four years to three.

Gray, after hearing a plea for modification of sentence by attorneys William Marshall Morgan and Burton Marks, agreed that consecutive terms of three years and one year may run concurrently.

Gray took the same action last month with another defendant, Benjamin J. Teltelbaum.

Jacobs, 51, a professional gambler and former operator of panguingua card parlors, has a prior record of misdemeanor gambling and book-making arrests. He was ordered to surrender Thursday to begin serving his sentence at the Terminal Island federal prison.

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